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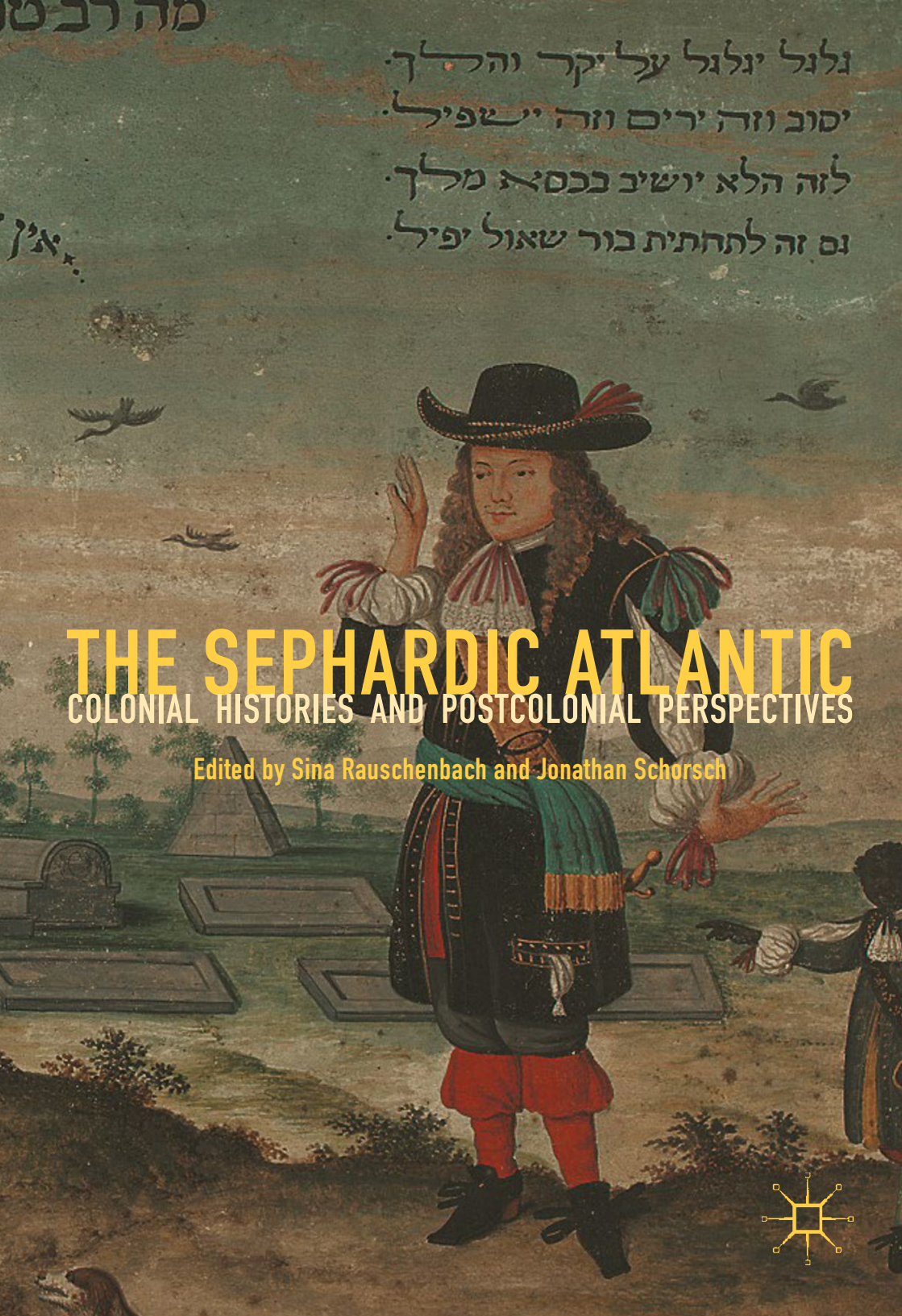
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אין

THE SEPHARDIC ATLANTIC

COLONIAL HISTORIES AND POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES

Edited by Sina Rauschenbach and Jonathan Schorsch



The Sephardic Atlantic

Sina Rauschenbach • Jonathan Schorsch
Editors

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Colonial Histories and Postcolonial Perspectives

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Postcolonial Approaches to the Early Modern Sephardic Atlantic

Sina Rauschenbach and Jonathan Schorsch

From the perspective of early modern Jewry there existed two Atlantic worlds that were disconnected and linked at the same time.¹ The first comprised the Iberian, Catholic orbit, a sphere forbidden to Jews as Jews, but rich with

¹For recent surveys and discussions, see Aviva Ben-Ur, “Atlantic Jewish History: A Conceptual Reorientation,” in *Constellations of Atlantic Jewish History, 1550–1890: The Arnold and Deanne Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica: A Companion Volume to an Exhibition Held in the Goldstein Family Gallery of the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts*, ed. Arthur Kiron (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 25–46; Ben-Ur, “Jewish Communities,” in *The Princeton Companion to Atlantic History*, eds. Joseph C. Miller et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 263–67; David L. Graizbord, “Between Ethnicity, Commerce, Religion, and Race: The Elusive Definition of an Early Modern Jewish Atlantic,” in *Theorising the Ibero-American Atlantic*, eds. Harald E. Braun and Lisa Vollendorf (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 117–40, and Sina Rauschenbach, “Jüdischer Atlantik,” in *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit Online*, ed. Friedrich Jaeger, first published online 2016, accessed January 25, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1163/2352-0248_edn_a6036000. For the Iberian Atlantic, see Jonathan Schorsch, *Swimming the Christian Atlantic: Judeoconversos, Afroiberians and Amerindians in the Seventeenth Century*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

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New Christian or *converso* involvement. It spanned from the Iberian Peninsula to Spanish and Portuguese colonies in Africa, Atlantic islands in Spanish and/or Portuguese possession, South America, Central America, the Spanish Caribbean and Spanish territories in what would later become the United States.² The second Jewish Atlantic world entailed a transnational network of openly Jewish communities that former *conversos* and Sephardim (hebraicized plural for Sephardic [Jew] in the singular) forged across Protestant metropolises and colonies, calling themselves mostly Spanish and Portuguese Jews, Portuguese Jews, Portuguese or simply *A Nação* (The Nation). Built around Amsterdam's Sephardic communities, which were merged into the famous *Kehilah Kedoshah Talmud Torah* (Holy Congregation of Torah Study) in 1639,³ this network first expanded to Dutch Brazil (1630–1654) and the first open Jewish community founded in the Americas.⁴ Afterwards, it developed remarkably, ultimately spanning Sephardic communities from

² Among a vast literature: Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires, 1540–1740* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450 to 1800* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), ch. 6–12; Nathan Wachtel, *The Faith of Remembrance: Marrano Labyrinths*, trans. Nikki Halpern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Schorsch, *Swimming the Christian Atlantic*; José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, “A World in Motion: Jews, Conversos and the Portuguese and Dutch Empires,” in *Conversos, marrani e nuove comunità ebraiche in età moderna* (Florence: Giuntina, 2015), 159–72; Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300–1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ch. 4–5; Irene Silverblatt, *Modern Inquisitions: Peru and the Colonial Origins of the Civilized World* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2004), ch. 6: “New Christians and New World Fears.”

³ For some of the most important English-language monographs, see Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000). For a compilation of some of the most important essays, see Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). For Amsterdam's dominance in the seventeenth-century Sephardic Atlantic, see Kaplan, “The Curaçao and Amsterdam Jewish Communities in the 17th and 18th Centuries,” *American Jewish History* 72, no. 2 (1982): 193–211. The dependence of Atlantic communities on Amsterdam can also be seen in the architecture of the respective synagogues. See Laura A. Leibman, “Sephardic Sacred Space in Colonial America,” *Jewish History* 25 (2011): 13–41.

⁴ For the most recent book on Jews in Dutch Brazil, see Ronaldo Vainfas, *Jerusalém colonial: judeus portugueses no Brasil holandês* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2010). For a recent overview in English, see Jonathan I. Israel and Stuart Schwartz, *The Expansion of Tolerance: Religion in Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2007).

London to Western Africa, the so-called “Wild Coast” in the Guyanas, Curaçao in the Dutch, Jamaica and Barbados in the British, St. Thomas and St. Croix in the Danish Caribbean, as well as settlements on the east coast of North America, among them Nieuw Amsterdam (later New York), Newport, Charleston, Savannah, and Philadelphia. For a short time, French territories in the Caribbean were also open to Jewish settlers, but Jews were expelled from Martinique and Guadeloupe in 1685, and our knowledge about crypto-Jewish settlers in the aftermath of the expulsion is still limited.⁵ Both *conversos* and open Jews settled on Santo Domingo, which became St. Domingue after French conquest, though the history here is also convoluted.⁶ With regard to the French metropolitan context, the situation is ambivalent. Even though Jewish settlement in France was officially forbidden since the expulsions of the fourteenth century, it is well known that, due to the lack of an inquisitional court, “Portuguese” crypto-Jewish communities blossomed in Bordeaux and Bayonne, and scholars are more and more inclined to include French New Christian settlements in the “open Jewish Atlantic” in spite of their Catholic and legally rather restrictive contexts.⁷

⁵William F. S. Miles, “Caribbean Hybridity and the Jews of Martinique,” in *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean: Fragments of Memory*, ed. Kristin Ruggiero (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 139–62; Mordechai Arbell, “Jewish Settlements in the French Colonies in the Caribbean (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Cayenne) and the ‘Black Code,’” in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450 to 1800*, eds. Paolo Bernadini and Norman Fiering (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 287–313; Zvi Loker, *Jews in the Caribbean: Evidence on the History of the Jews in the Caribbean Zone in Colonial Times* (Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim, Institute for Research on the Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage, 1991); Seymour B. Lieberman, “Anti-Semitism in Martinique in the 17th Century,” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 10, no. 4 (1969): 40–47.

⁶John D. Garrigus, “‘New Christians’/‘New Whites’: Sephardic Jews, Free People of Color, and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue, 1760–1789,” in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450 to 1800*, eds. Paolo Bernadini and Norman Fiering (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 314–32; Zvi Loker, “Were There Jewish Communities in Saint Domingue (Haiti)?” *Jewish Social Studies* 45, no. 2 (1983): 135–46.

⁷David L. Graizbord, “Becoming Jewish in Early Modern France: Documents on Jewish Community-Building in Seventeenth-Century Bayonne and Peyrehorade,” *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 1 (2006): 147–80; Gérard Nahon, *Métropoles et périphéries sefarades d’Occident: Kairouan, Amsterdam, Bayonne, Bordeaux, Jérusalem* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1993); Frances Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux: Assimilation and Emancipation in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1978); Jean Cavignac, “L’immigration des Juifs portugais à Bordeaux au XVIIIe siècle,” *Revue de Pau et de Béarn* (1987): 125–38; Silvia Marzagalli, “Atlantic Trade and Sephardic Merchants in Eighteenth-Century France: The Case of Bordeaux,” in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450 to 1800*, eds. Paolo Bernadini and Norman Fiering

Our concept of the Sephardic Atlantic includes both the Catholic and openly Jewish segments of this intertwined diaspora and set of networks, a stateless, territory-lacking quasi-empire of communities—“islands” in a sea of non-Jewish host countries.⁸ As a network of families and independent communities that spanned nation-states, empires, continents, and religions and hence characterized by an unusually high degree of complexity, Sephardim in the Atlantic world pose challenges to accepted historiographical fields and methods. *Conversos*, who fled Iberian lands and the Inquisitions, created a new and unique western Sephardic Judaism and Jewishness out of the remnants of Iberian precedents. Together with *conversos* from the Iberian Atlantic these Sephardim, called “New Jews” by Yosef Kaplan, played a dominant mercantile role in the region and in some countries and colonies enjoyed unprecedented privileges and rights. At the same time, Sephardic Jews in non-European settings were typical examples for what has been termed “colonized colonizers.” Some Sephardim willingly participated in colonial suppression and exploitation; they considered themselves part of the “white elite” and distanced themselves from subaltern traditions and cultures of knowledge even though some of them were also deeply influenced by those very same traditions and cultures. At the same time however, they suffered anti-Jewish prejudice and othering from all sides: Christian settlers, who considered Jews to be “not quite white,”⁹ or abolitionists and also slaves, who quickly came to create and internalize anti-Jewish/anti-Semitic narratives about a special and explicitly “Jewish” version of colonial violence and brutality.¹⁰

(New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 268–86; Richard Menkis, “Patriarchs and Patricians: The Gradis Family of Eighteenth-Century Bordeaux,” in *From East and West: Jews in a Changing Europe, 1750–1870*, eds. Frances Malino and David Sorkin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 11–45; Paul Butel, “Contribution à l’étude des négociants juifs portugais de Bordeaux et de Bayonne: le cas de la maison Azavedo,” in *Bayonne sa région: Actes du 35^e Congrès de la Fédération historique du Sud-Ouest* (Bayonne: Fédération Historique du Sud-Ouest, 1983), 219–41.

⁸As far as the authors can tell, the first use of the term “Sephardic Atlantic” is Schorsch, *Swimming the Christian Atlantic*, ch. 1. There, however, he links the Sephardic Atlantic with the *converso* Atlantic, while using the former name only for the openly Jewish segment. Ronnie Perelis, *Narratives from the Sephardic Atlantic: Blood and Faith* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), next picks up the term “Sephardic Atlantic,” seemingly intending the two segments as a composite.

⁹Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 179. See also Ben-Ur, “Atlantic Jewish History,” 40.

¹⁰Wieke Vink, *Creole Jews: Negotiating Community in Colonial Suriname* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

The Portuguese Jewish Nation, or *A Nação* (The Nation), wrested for itself collectively in the Dutch and English colonial orbit an extraordinarily high degree of autonomy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which can be seen as part of a decolonization process of moving toward (national) independence. A later kind of Jewish decolonization has to do with the gradual move away from the “mother” communities back in Europe, such as Amsterdam or London, and the turn to local concerns and authority. In the early eighteenth century and thereafter, the fitful and gradual process of hemispheric decolonization itself contributed to the Jews’ gaining suffrage, though it is not clear to what degree Jews supported independence, while to some extent the process also pitted Jews against the emancipation of the slaves and the granting of rights to free people of color. Several of the chapters here trace the ways postcolonial-era collective memory and fictional treatments by and about Sephardim/*conversos* process which “side” Sephardim/*conversos* took, that of the colonizers or the indigenous and enslaved. By today, for many, Sephardic identity stands alongside other identities—Caribbean, African, queer—signifying in ways not “controlled” by the previously domineering Sephardic community governing bodies.

Despite their importance in colonial settings, Jews have long been ignored in major studies of colonial history, partly, as has been suggested, because they don’t exactly fit into colonial dichotomies and hence complicate narratives that have been dominant in early Postcolonial Studies.¹¹ In general terms, Postcolonial Studies tends to focus on the postindependence eras of the respective colonies and to neglect early modern examples and times. Scholars of the Enlightenment have even reproached postcolonial scholars by arguing that “many concepts drawn from postcolonial theory are parachuted into analyses of eighteenth-century texts without sufficient recognition of the perils of anachronism.”¹² Obviously, the Sephardic

¹¹ Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel, “Introduction,” in *Colonialism and the Jews*, eds. Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff and Maud S. Mandel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 1–25, 10–15. An exception is Roberto J. González-Casanovas, “Mixed Views of Jews and Conversos in Brazil 1630–1654: From Colonial to Postcolonial Discourses of *Convivencia*,” in *Reconfiguring Brazil: Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Roberto J. González-Casanovas (Auckland: University of Auckland, 2012), 1–14.

¹²For instance, Lynn Festa and Daniel Carey, “Some Answers to the Question: ‘What is Postcolonial Enlightenment?’,” in *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century*

Atlantic as an early modern network with its pinnacle between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries is susceptible to similar criticism. Nonetheless, opting to eschew such a narrow historicist perspective, many postcolonial scholars do not restrict the term “postcolonial” to modern history, but rather use it in a broader sense, applied to any experience and culture “affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.”¹³ Furthermore, some scholars see the sibling field of decolonial thought, which emerged from South American scholarship, as “start[ing] with the earlier European incursions upon the lands that came to be known as the Americas from the fifteenth century onwards.”¹⁴

With regard to Jewish Studies, scholars have only hesitantly made use of recent methodological turns in postcolonial thought. On one hand, scholars of Sephardic history have responded quickly to the blossoming of Atlantic History since the 1990s,¹⁵ contributing and proposing new fields of research with regard to Jews and *conversos* in colonial settings, transnational networks, and solidarities as well as highly under-researched diasporas and communities in early modern Africa¹⁶ and the Caribbean.¹⁷ On the other hand, problematic relations between Jewish Studies and Postcolonial Studies have long been an obstacle to judicious discussions about postcolonial approaches to Jewish Atlantic networks and communities.¹⁸ Among the various difficulties that explain these problematic relations, two are

Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory, eds. Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1–33, 23.

¹³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (London, 2002 [1989]), 2.

¹⁴ Gurminder K. Bhabra, “Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues,” *Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 2 (2014): 115–121, 115.

¹⁵ See Bernardini and Fiering, *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West*; Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora*; and Richard L. Kagan, ed., *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ José da Silva Horta and Peter Mark, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ For recent studies of Sephardic settlements in the Caribbean, see Jane Gerber, ed., *The Jews in the Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and Julie-Marthe Cohen, ed., *Joden in de Cariben: Vier Eeuwen Joodse Geschiedenis in Suriname en Curaçao* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2015).

¹⁸ For two recent complaints, see Willi Goetschel and Ato Quayson, “Introduction: Jewish Studies and Postcolonialism,” *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 3 (2016): 1–9, 3, and Sarah Phillips Casteel, *Calypto Jews: Jewishness in the Caribbean Literary Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 9.

especially prominent. One is the misuse of early modern Atlantic Sephardic-*converso* history by twentieth-century Afro-American scholarship, which, drawing on Afrocentric perspectives influenced by postcolonial thought, often evinced an anti-Semitic orientation.¹⁹ The second difficulty is related to different interpretations with regard to the ambivalent relationship between Zionism and Colonialism.²⁰

However, Jewish Studies has undergone important changes over the last decades, and new and more globalized trends are clearly visible. Not only has Sephardic Studies become a blossoming and promising field in Departments of Jewish History and Thought worldwide, but it has also been challenged to include a growing interest in non-European Sephardic communities in America, Africa, or the Middle East, as well as the construction of “the Arab Jew” as a phenomenon of an “introverted colonialism” within twentieth-century Judaism.²¹ Finally, scholars have called for a new “imperial turn” in Jewish history, to question national paradigms and reconsider entanglements between “colonial Jews” and their supposed “European counterparts.”²² Even before, scholars in early modern Sephardic history have stressed the need to study Sephardic networks beyond imperial boundaries in times before modern nation-states come into existence.²³ In addition, some scholars have wielded postcolonial

¹⁹ See Jonathan Schorsch, “American Jewish Historians, Colonial Jews and Blacks, and the Limits of ‘Wissenschaft’: A Critical Review,” *Jewish Social Studies* N.S. 6, no. 2 (2000): 102–32; Nathaniel Deutsch, “The Proximate Other: The Nation of Islam and Judaism,” in *Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism*, eds. Yvonne Chireau and Nathaniel Deutsch (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 91–117; Robert F. Reid-Pharr, “Speaking through Anti-Semitism: the Nation of Islam and the Poetics of Black (Counter) Modernity,” *Social Text* 49 (1996): 133–47.

²⁰ For some of the most recent discussions, see the last section of Katz, Leff, and Mandel, eds., *Colonialism and the Jews*, 273–340. In their introduction, Katz, Leff, and Mandel describe the colonial history of Zionism as one of the main reasons for the “missed encounter between Colonial History and Jewish History.” *Ibid.*, 15.

²¹ Goetschel and Quayson, “Introduction: Jewish Studies and Postcolonialism,” 6.

²² Katz, Leff, and Mandel, “Introduction.” Katz, Leff, and Mandel’s volume does not look beyond the modern period and francophone Jews.

²³ See, for example, Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora*; Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal’s Atlantic Diaspora and the Crises of the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jessica Vance Roitman, *The Same but Different? Inter-Cultural Trade and the Sephardim, 1595–1640* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). For the Mediterranean, see Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

thought in an attempt to challenge its very tendency to marginalize or miscategorize Jews.²⁴

As the world moves, possibly, past a first world/third world political orientation, toward a more north/south alignment, the place of non-Ashkenazic Jews becomes important again. This, intriguingly, places Sephardic Studies in an interesting position. In the face of Ashkenazic dominance (demographically, culturally, and in terms of production of knowledge), the field has generally endeavored to bolster Sephardic uniqueness and pride. Nonetheless, Sephardic Studies has lately seen an outpouring of theoretically-informed, critical works that wrestle anew, armed with new insights, with questions such as *converso* identity, the Sephardic commercial empire, Sephardic conservatism, and perceived self-importance.

Our volume aims to contribute to the growing field of the early modern Jewish Atlantic, while stimulating new discussions at the interface between Jewish Studies and Postcolonial Studies. As a consequence, it is not our main interest to discuss the advantages and/or disadvantages of the general concept of Atlantic history from a Jewish perspective²⁵ but to use the Jewish Atlantic as a testing ground for the application of postcolonial approaches to early modern Jewish history and thought. The volume's concentration on the Sephardic Atlantic is due to the prominent role of Sephardim in Atlantic history prior to the late modern period. However, as already said, the Sephardic Atlantic as we understand the concept includes both the Iberian *converso* and the non-Iberian "open" Jewish Atlantic. Several factors convince us that for the period ending in the mid-nineteenth century, this notion of a Sephardic Atlantic holds advantages over the idea of a Jewish Atlantic. It is simply the case that the overwhelming majority of Jews involved in Atlantic-world activities were Sephardic, not Ashkenazic. Indeed, Sephardic leaders often insisted that newly-founded Atlantic communities be officially governed according to "Portuguese" Jewish norms and rites. Generally, therefore, the forms and

²⁴ Santiago Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Jonathan Boyarin, *The Unconverted Self: Jews, Indians, and the Identity of Christian Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

²⁵ For a survey of recent discussions with regard to the general concept of Atlantic History, see Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds. *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). For Atlantic History and Jewish Studies, see Adam Sutcliffe, "Jewish History in an Age of Atlanticism," in *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800*, eds. Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 18–30.

structures of the relevant Atlantic communities bore specifically Sephardic features: the use of Portuguese and Spanish internally; an overtly Iberian worldview, including the concept of *Bom Judesmo*,²⁶ involvement in particular commercial fields reflecting centuries of Sephardic/*converso* experience, if not domination (slave trading, sugar, and other agricultural products, inter- and intra-colonial trade in the Atlantic world, etc.); a high degree of bidirectional interrelations and self-conscious connectedness between *conversos* (in this case frequently those with hidden Jewish loyalties) and Sephardim. For these reasons we rely on recent contributions that insist not only upon transimperial perspectives but also upon transreligious tendencies in early modern Western Sephardic entanglements.²⁷ At the same time, the volume's contributions don't view Sephardic histories and cultures as isolated phenomena but locate their discussions in more general contexts of Jewish and non-Jewish experiences.

As the coverage of some of the chapters in this volume moves past this early modern configuration, the perspective widens accordingly. Some of the chapters transcend the early modern period and also trace their topics well into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. In most cases, the foreground of the late-modern material is the stretching forward chronologically of consequences of early modern phenomena, as well as the reaching backward of postcolonial memories or reconstructions of the colonial period. Obviously, this is especially important for the book's last part where Sephardic history is reconsidered in the light of twentieth-century Sephardic and non-Sephardic, Jewish and non-Jewish, European, African, and American memory. But it is also true for some of the chapters in earlier parts which deal with topics other than memory. At the same time, when going beyond the early modern period, we need to recognize that the Sephardic Atlantic underwent enormous changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, shaped by both external and internal dynamics such as creolization, resistance to slavery, the Enlightenment, secularization, industrialization, the struggles for colonial independence, the collapse of the European empires, and the various forms of emancipation. The last comprises an exemplary phenomenon from a conceptual point of view in that it refers to both the end of slavery and the gaining of

²⁶ Yosef Kaplan, "Bom Judesmo: the Western Sephardic Diaspora," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 639–69.

²⁷ Graizbord, "Between Ethnicity, Commerce, Religion, and Race."

unmitigated Jewish citizenship, two different but related trajectories whose dynamics also differ in metropolitan and colonial contexts.²⁸

The volume's thirteen chapters are divided into three parts, combining case studies with theoretical reflections attending to material, socioeconomic and cultural concerns. The first part of the volume deals with race and blood in the early and late modern Sephardic Atlantic. The expansion of Europeans to other parts of the globe brought about significant continuities with and disruptions to prior social structures and human hierarchies both back in Europe and in the lands where Europeans newly found themselves, of which Sephardim and *conversos* were both victims and collaborators. In terms of blood, culture, and religion, all important markers inherited from the classical world and Judaism, along with phenomena that became increasingly important in the wake of the *Reconquista*, European expansion, and colonization, such as slavery and race, Sephardim and *conversos* occupied a frequently changing but always complicated in-between status. The chapters in this part explore questions regarding central post-colonial issues such as binarisms (especially black/white, but also savage/civilized and other dichotomies), slavery, othering, hegemony, ambivalence, creolization, appropriation, and counter-discourse.

In the second chapter, Jonathan Schorsch revisits the vexing question of New Christian slave traders. He offers an analysis of the often starkly contrasting scholarship on the topic, before proposing ways out of this impasse based on recent scholarly work that has, on the one hand, reconceptualized the early Portuguese experience in West Africa, as well as the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, and, on the other hand, expanded knowledge about particular New Christian slave traders produced by intrepid archival research. Moving beyond anti-Jewish prejudices or inclinations in the relevant Hispanic and Lusophone scholarship itself comprises a postcolonial effort. Still, while it is difficult to see New Christian slave traders as operating outside or against the colonial episteme, Schorsch questions whether we can read these individuals as subverters of dominant Iberian values, as Jewish Studies scholars often suggest regarding New Christians, or as abettors of the Iberian empires through their commercial endeavors. Instead, research on this subgroup of New Christian merchants corroborates the many calls to recognize the heterogeneous identities of New Christians.

²⁸Laura Arnold Leibman and Sam May, "Making Jews: Race, Gender and Identity in Barbados in the Age of Emancipation," *American Jewish History* 99, no. 1 (2015): 1–26.

In the third chapter, Peter Mark and José da Silva Horta question the historical adequacy of approaching “racism” in a global and *longue durée* perspective and instead call for case studies that distinguish between different cultural categories of domination and the relevant terms to refer to and describe those categories in their own contexts and languages. Their approach is based on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century West African societies, which were not dominated by European powers. According to Mark and Horta, in these societies codes of color were not based on phenotypes but on lineage and religion. Some European merchants settling Senegambia and Cabo Verde quickly integrated into the societies that hosted them, including adopting local sociopolitical categories. In the case of Jewish traders of Portuguese origin in early seventeenth-century Senegambia, this adoption was mostly visible with regard to the construction of kinship via marriage and the raising of their Luso-African offspring within their Jewish communities. But Portuguese Jews also took on local forms of religious expression and they ended up adhering to multiple and contextually bound identities borrowed from the respective cultures and contexts that they had decided to share.

In the fourth chapter, looking at nineteenth-century Curaçao, Jessica V. Roitman expands on the usual explorations of Sephardic Jews as playing a mediating role between the Afro-Curaçaoan majority and the tiny white Protestant, largely Dutch, elite, a role typically assigned to Jews. In keeping with the comparative turn in ethnic history, as well as with current discussions around transnationalism and decolonization, she looks at direct horizontal relationships between the two subaltern groups. Roitman gives examples of political alliances between Sephardic Jews and Afro-Curaçaoans that reveal exogamous and mutual trust against then-prevailing forms of conservatism, thus challenging scholarly assumptions about intercommunal distance and animosity. These surprising examples of collegiality and camaraderie, some of which even challenged the vertical relations of domination, are understood by Roitman as a reflection of Sephardic (and Afro-Curaçaoan) creolization and as a basis from which to challenge the prevailing “zero-sum” logic of competition between minority groups.

The second part of the volume is focused on metropolises and colonies. Chapters in this part deal with power structures, challenges to colonial categories such as “center” and “periphery,” and questions of migration, mingling, heterogeneity, and hybridity within early modern colonial

empires. Others continue recent debates about “Empire at the Periphery,”²⁹ intercolonial transimperial networks or entanglements in the early modern Jewish and Christian Atlantic.³⁰ On the one hand, they depart from the idea that metropolitan dynamics need to be read in light of colonial experiences as much as colonial experiences need to be understood in light of metropolitan discussions.³¹ On the other hand, they question the very dominance of studies on the vertical relationship between metropole and colony, opening space for horizontally-oriented research on relationships between colonies within or beyond the limits of empires from a minor perspective.³²

In the fifth chapter, José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim reconsiders the relationship between Portuguese Jewish mimesis of Portuguese imperial ambitions and colonial messianism and their behavior vis-à-vis non-European others: Sephardim welcomed African slaves, who were frequently converted and assimilated into Sephardic families and communities. Yet, this inclusiveness was accompanied by an imperialistic insistence that the new communities of the Atlantic be governed solely according to the Portuguese (Jewish) religious rite. Tavim argues that while Sephardic Jews and *conversos* struggled against Christian oppression and marginalization, they shared or adopted aspects of the dominant culture’s colonialist and imperialist theopolitics that they thought served to help them bolster their own autonomy and lofty self-image and that they hoped ultimately would bring about complete Jewish decolonization: the end of their exile.

Common narratives hold that religious tolerance in frontier societies was often more widespread than in metropolitan contexts. In the sixth chapter, Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger refers to the case of Dutch Northeast Brazil to question these narratives. According to Phaf-Rheinberger, Caspar Barlaeus, the famous Dutch philosopher, professor at the Amsterdam

²⁹ Christian Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621–1713* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

³⁰ Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation*; Roitman, *The Same but Different?*

³¹ Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 1–56.

³² Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, “Thinking Through the Minor, Transnationally,” in *Minor Transnationalism*, eds. in Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 1–23, 2.

Atheneum Illustre, and follower of a more “liberal” interpretation of Calvinism in the Netherlands, proves exactly the opposite attitude when it comes to his perception of Jewish life in Amsterdam and in Dutch Brazil. Whereas Barlaeus was in close contact with the Amsterdam Jewish community, he praised the Brazilian reign of Count Maurits of Nassau Siegen for the restriction of Jewish life in the colony. One of his arguments points to the “hypocrisy” of New Christian settlers whose multiple identities and transimperial activities inspired little trustworthiness. Phaf-Rheinberger reads this as an accusation of camouflage (a term from Jacques Lacan via Homi Bhabha), a result of New Christian ambivalent mimicry of the dominant and colonizing but internally variegated Old Christian culture. In twentieth- and twenty-first-century narratives, the same ambivalent identities and transimperial activities of Sephardic Atlantic Jews still contribute to the rise of historical memories which differ strongly with regard to their interpretation of Jewish life in Northeast Brazil. At the same time, New Christian hybridity turns into a source of admiration and inspiration which is mostly visible in a number of recent historical novels on New Christian and Jewish settlers in Northeast Brazil and its Sephardic Atlantic context.

In the seventh chapter, Sina Rauschenbach traces strategies of “writing back” in eighteenth-century Surinamese Jewish historiography. David de Isaac Cohen Nassy’s famous *Essai historique sur la colonie de Suriname* is analyzed as a Jewish and Creole response to histories of the colony written by European authors, histories that either neglect the importance of Jews and/or distort the picture of Suriname in an unfavorable perspective. Modifying Marie Louise Pratt’s concept of auto-ethnography, Rauschenbach characterizes Nassy’s *Essai* as an early modern Surinamese Jewish auto-historiography, stressing not only Nassy’s Jewish but also his continental and American perspective. In the final part, the scope is broadened and the discussion of Jewish-American historiography is supplemented by discussions of similar expressions of Jewish-Creole thought, challenging European mechanisms of control. “Creole” is used here in the Spanish American sense of the word *Criollo*, to refer to descendents of European immigrants born in the Americas. Several examples illustrate how Jewish Creole thought not only questions Christian strategies but also Jewish hierarchies and the dominance of metropolitan Jewish communities such as Amsterdam or London in the Sephardic diaspora.

In the eighth chapter, Aviva Ben-Ur sheds new light on the Jewish community of eighteenth-century Savannah, Georgia, reading its archival sources through a transimperial and Atlantic history approach. As against the

common narrative of a community built by Iberian exiles striving for religious freedom, Ben-Ur locates the driving forces for Jewish settlement in colonial Georgia in the needs, traditions, and interests of Sephardic communities in Amsterdam, London, and the larger Atlantic world. Her study is exemplary of new approaches to the Sephardic Atlantic and emphasizes our need to combine thinking in and beyond imperial terms, however ambivalent Jewish imperial belonging is. In the case of Savannah, the ambivalence of a community of Jews participating in British colonization projects and surpassing the very same imperial structures of which they form part is especially visible when it comes to poverty management. The Sephardic example and the question of transimperial connectedness also urge us to rethink our concepts of migration and/or settlement and to acknowledge an additional perspective beyond the common dichotomy of metropole and colony when it comes to Jews in settler societies, which are interconnected but sometimes too marginalized to profit from a centralized authority in Europe.

In chapter nine, Jan C. Jansen provides a close, contrapuntal reading of early Jamaican Sephardic freemasonry that is carefully contextualized within larger Atlantic-world trends in the early nineteenth century. Participation in West Indian masonic life enabled elite Sephardic men to stage claims of their belonging to a heterogeneous yet coherent imperial community, at a time when legal equality of rights between them and other members of this community was not yet established. At the same time, the masonic network proved flexible enough to retain and refashion certain ties that went beyond the sphere of the British Empire and that were essential for the Sephardic diaspora's position within the Atlantic world. Jansen shows that as the transnational Sephardic networks declined and Jamaican politics turned to the question of citizenship for subalterns such as Jews and free blacks, Sephardic male elites founded their own masonic lodges that allowed them to socialize with the right kinds of people and afforded them a platform in their fight for the vote and recognition in the colony. Sephardic agency and counter-discourse in this case was class-based and gendered and appropriated/shared the dominant anti-black attitude.

The third part of the volume aims at contributing to the growing field of Memory Studies. Memory Studies are not only paramount in both in Postcolonial and Jewish Studies. They have also been at the center of the majority of interdisciplinary research done at the crossroads of both disciplines. Interestingly, however, interdisciplinary approaches until now have mostly been dedicated to the study of (Ashkenazic) Holocaust memory in

comparative perspective.³³ The authors of our volume show that memories of Sephardic pasts even contribute to a more varied and sophisticated picture of modern forms of remembering as a multidirectional and multilayered cultural practice.³⁴ These memories are of special importance in the Caribbean, with the strong presence of the trauma of 1492 in both Sephardic and colonial history. In different contexts, they take different form. In any case, they are not necessarily identical with what has been studied as “Sephardism,” a modern and mostly Ashkenazic reliance on a glorious Iberian and Western European Jewish past as a means of othering “Eastern” Jews in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany³⁵ or as a construct of a linguistic continuity with a distant Iberian past among early Ashkenazic immigrants in nineteenth-century Latin America.³⁶

In the tenth chapter, Ana Sobral analyzes the figure of Christopher Columbus in U.S. American and Caribbean memories as represented in two works by Steve Berry and Edward Kritzler. In both works, Columbus’ hidden connections with Iberian Jews and/or *conversos* are employed as a means of memory activism and the production of entangled memories in the (re-)construction of Caribbean histories and identities. On one hand, dismembered Jewish pasts are re-remembered to promote a sense of agency, associating the “discovery of America” with the Jewish people and Jewish refugees and immigrants from Europe. On the other hand, Columbus serves as a mediating figure between Jewish Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean memories. As against anti-Semitic propaganda in twentieth-century Afro-American nationalist movements, Caribbean imaginaries celebrate Jews and “frontier outlaws” (pirates and Maroons)

³³ Goetschel and Quayson, “Introduction: Jewish Studies and Postcolonialism,” 3.

³⁴ For multidirectional memory, see Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009). For the multilayered perspective, see Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).

³⁵ John M. Efron, *German Jewry and the Allure of the Sephardic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Carsten S. Schapkow, *Role Model and Countermodel: The Golden Age of Iberian Jewry and German Jewish Culture during the Age of Emancipation* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016 [2011]).

³⁶ Yael Halevi Wise, ed., *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Edna Aizenberg, “The Allure of Sepharad,” in *Sephardic Identity: Essays on a Vanishing Jewish Culture*, ed. George K. Zucker (Jefferson: McFarland, 2005), 157–63.

as subcultures of resistance and as cracks within the European colonial enterprise. With this, they promote new forms of solidarity while celebrating a Jewish identity rooted (as if native) in the Americas, which seems to contradict Columbus' depiction as a traveling figure whose identity is characterized by movement.

Sarah Phillips Casteel continues in the eleventh chapter to discuss the intersection of memories of slavery, Sephard, and the Holocaust in the twentieth-century Caribbean. What Sobral does with popular literary fiction, Casteel does for some of the most important works of Caribbean postcolonial literature. Based on Derek Walcott's concept of "triangulation," Casteel shows how, complementary to its European counterparts, Caribbean Sephardism focuses on 1492 to connect the traumatic memories of Iberian Jews, indigenous Americans, and African slaves and to serve as a vehicle for multidirectional memory in the twentieth-century Americas. Historical narratives praise the contribution of Jews to the growth of Caribbean colonies while at the same time complicating a black-white binary in past slavery and defamiliarizing the institution of slavery by recovery of Sephardic history. But at the same time these narratives use their Sephardic protagonists to reconnect the Old and the New World. Finally, African Caribbean authors highlight the Caribbean as a geographical region where expulsion memories and Holocaust memories interact and reshape one another. In this context, Sephardism assumes the role of a postcolonial counter-memory which challenges the European dominance in Memory Studies without tapping into the trap of competitive victimhood.

In the twelfth chapter, Heather Hermant follows the fragmented story of a Sephardic girl/boy Esther Brandeau/Jacques La Fargue, who arrived in New France in 1738, through various retellings of this "foundational" moment in Canadian literature and media. The pressure put upon Esther/Jacques to convert to Christianity, their ultimately unknowable gender and unclear past and fate—all speak to religious, gender, and identity Marranism, which Hermant probes through Queer Theory, producing a multidimensional analysis of hiddenness and crossing in the face of colonial surveillance. The silences and gaps of this riveting tale of colonial realities appealed to postcolonial writers both Jewish and not. Hermant notes the way postcolonial retellings of Esther/Jacques' story remember or position Sephardim/*conversos* in order to message stances in contemporary ethnic, religious, or political debates, often key moments in the evolution of Canadian identity and the Canadian polity. Some iterations of the

story ponder the significance of Esther/Jacques' life in terms of what it says about Jews and colonization, while the tale has often been deployed to think about belonging and nation. Many recountings of this episode reveal the afterlife of colonial tropes, though more recent versions mine this afterlife as a proof-text for disruptive readings of colonialism.

Turning to a different scene of attempted empire-building, Yigal S. Nizri explores in the thirteenth and last chapter how some of the Jewish communities of Morocco remembered and commemorated the shocking and (in)famous defeat of the Portuguese by Moroccan forces in 1578. Communal histories saw this outcome as divine intervention, a new salvation of the local Jews—it is possible that had the Portuguese won, they would have forcibly converted all the local Jews just as they had in Portugal some 80 years earlier—and punishment of their former oppressors. Thus, some of the Moroccan Jews made out of this event a local Purim, celebrating it as a new version of the ancient holiday of deliverance from Persian oppression. The various scrolls describing this event present a postcolonial counter-discourse—*avant la lettre*—by Moroccan Jews in general, but more specifically by Sephardim who had escaped their internal colonization in Portugal. Legends relate that the local Jews treated the Portuguese captives from the failed military campaign with great kindness, providing a narrative of Jewish alterity in contrast to Portuguese oppressiveness, the latter being perhaps implicitly juxtaposed to “indigenous” Moroccan/Muslim hospitality.

Overall, our contributors show the degree to which settler societies in the Sephardic Atlantic mirror broader settler societies and interact with and/or differ from them. The chapters in this volume suggest that in the Sephardic Atlantic, creolization (now in the broadest sense) was accompanied by and led to inter- and intracommunity heterogeneity, rather than hybridity. This conclusion parallels the similar turn in Postcolonial Studies away from the overly harmonizing notion of hybridity in favor of heterogeneity.³⁷ Several of the chapters insist on attending to horizontal relations between social-political-religious groups, rather than just attending to vertical relations between the dominant group and the others (Mark and Horta, Tavim, Roitman, Sobral and Casteel). This perspective reveals Sephardim and

³⁷For instance, David Theo Goldberg, “Heterogeneity and Hybridity: Colonial Legacy, Postcolonial Heresy,” in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005), 72–86.

conversos to have had ambivalent, pluriform, and nuanced relations with other subaltern groups.

Jewish *difference* remains contested in ways that question a monolithic colonial history or postcolonial trajectory. Some of our contributions (Mark and Horta, Tavim, Roitman, Ben-Ur) insist on it, in moves that might be seen as postcolonial reinscriptions of Jews as resisters of dominant Portuguese or Dutch forms of Othering Africans and their descendants. Others (Sobral, Casteel, Hermant) find this difference in the ways Jews are invoked in postcolonial culture, for instance in the Caribbean, as a group that shared/shares with Afro-Americans (in the hemispheric sense) and Native Americans a history of being dominated and exploited. Still others find forms of colonial mimicry in the ways Jews adopted and/or adapted attitudes and approaches of Christian Europeans to empire, commerce, colonization, or political advancement (Schorsch, Tavim, Phaf-Rheinberger, Jansen). Yet another group sees colonial Jews taking on by dint of geopolitical location subject positions similar to those of their fellow colonists, for instance, contesting metropolitan control and knowledge production (Rauschenbach). Some of the uncertainty around locating Jews in colonial history and postcolonial thinking has been fruitfully aided (but could be even further strengthened) through comparative analyses of other “marginal” European groups and colonizing powers, such as the Irish or Scandinavians.³⁸

Finally, perhaps, the chapters in our volume reflect the inevitable drift that comes from translating one field into another. From its inception, Postcolonial Studies has borne an explicitly political and ethical agenda, seeking an emergence from the cave of social, political, economic, and religious domination, exploitation, and oppression. Originally it was “The West” that Postcolonial Studies identified as the originator and major perpetrator of colonialism. While “The West” remains a major focus of postcolonial critiques, even as the concept has been disaggregated by deconstruction and poststructuralism, these critiques have been applied to other manifestations of empire (for example, premodern Hindu India,

³⁸ Heather Laird, “European Postcolonial Studies and Ireland: Towards a Conversation amongst the Colonized of Europe,” *Postcolonial Studies* 18, no. 4 (2015): 384–96; Joe Cleary, “Misplaced Ideas? Locating and Dislocating Ireland in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies,” in *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 101–24; Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin, eds., *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena* (New York: Springer, 2013).

early Islam, the Ottoman empire, the Inca and Aztecs). Some scholars go as far as insisting that decolonial thinking comprises much more than merely an academic discipline, but rather “is a way of being, thinking, doing, and becoming in the world.”³⁹ One major challenge for postcolonial readings of the Sephardic Atlantic remains the mapping of the complicated Sephardic/*converso* relationship to “The West,” a relationship in which Jewish Studies continues to be implicated. How does one pluralize the question of power without ignoring real power differentials? How can one adequately capture contradictory values and strategies in individuals and collectives? How do we address the question of and map the constellation of possibilities of scholars of a field determined by (ethnic, religious, national) identity being uncritical or critical of those they are studying, especially if the scholar belongs to the same group? How do we assess Jewish postcolonial thinking that sometimes seems overly intent on absolving Jews of the “colonial sins” attributed to them? Wielding postcolonial methodology within Jewish Studies queers “the Jewish Question” and the political and perspectival nature of scholarship, but returns us inevitably to both.

A brief note regarding terminology and stylistic conventions Differences in perspective and interpretation will be evident between the chapters. At a more local level, usage also varies between authors, for instance, regarding Whites, whites, “Whites” or “whites,” Maroons or maroons. In some places, we have chosen to honor these differences rather than attempt to enforce an arbitrary historiographical or hermeneutic unity. At the same time, *converso* and New Christian are generally used herein as synonyms. Their neutral sociological intention avoids labeling individuals’ or groups’ religious or national loyalties, unlike the more loaded terms *marrano* or crypto-Jew. Where interpretive consequences seemed insignificant, we have tried to unify spellings and formal references to bolster the coherence of the volume.

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³⁹Walter Mignolo, “Further Thoughts on (De)Coloniality,” in *Postcoloniality—Decoloniality—Black Critique: Joints and Fissures*, eds. Sabine Broeck and Carsten Junker (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2014), 21–53, 33.

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PART I

Race and Blood



CHAPTER 2

New Christian Slave Traders: A Literature Review and Research Agenda

Jonathan Schorsch

The topic of Portuguese New Christian Slave Traders has received intriguingly different treatments in Iberian and Jewish scholarship.¹ In the former—work produced by Hispanic and Lusophone scholars who treat the history of the Iberian empires—most researchers until recently have considered the New Christians to have been secretly loyal Jews. Portuguese New Christian domination of early Iberian slave trading, generally until the middle of the seventeenth century, is perceived as a (nefarious) Jewish endeavor. This perspective has influenced or is, at least now, paralleled in Black nationalist thought in the United States and beyond. In much Jewish scholarship—by which I mean research produced by scholars who are Jewish, in departments of Jewish Studies and/or focusing on Jewish topics—general New Christian transatlantic mercantile skill, if not

¹ Some of the material here appeared in my *Swimming the Christian Atlantic: Judeoconversos, Afroiberians and Amerindians in the Seventeenth Century*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2008). I thank my colleague Sina Rauschenbach for her very helpful comments on early drafts of this chapter. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

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domination, is connected to the commercial success of Sephardim, that is, openly professing Jews, since members of the two groups frequently cooperated in trade, but slave trading goes mostly unmentioned or is minimized.

A second rhetorical disparity accompanies this first one. Many works of Jewish scholarship—again, taking this as a matter of institutional affiliation and subject position—insist that the Portuguese New Christians, unlike their Spanish kin, remained fiercely loyal to Judaism, given the sudden and collective nature of their forced conversion in 1497, along with their being granted a general 40-year pardon for any religious transgressions. In this there is agreement with the perspective of Iberian research. Yet when it comes to treatment of Portuguese New Christian slave traders, almost all Jewish scholarship seeks to rebut allegations of their Jewishness.

The narratological conflicts reflect some interesting socioeconomic and theopolitical factors. Until recently the work of scholars trained in Iberian national(istic) schools of thought, whether in Spain, Portugal, or their former colonies, reflects a dominant majority position, often seeking to defend past national and religious historical choices and behavior, consciously or unconsciously continuing a discourse that justified attacks on Jewishness and agglomerating charges of immorality (slave trading) to New Christians as Jews. Black nationalist thought, essentially a postcolonial discourse, on the one hand finds in Jews a safe substitute target for its attacks on the colonialist persecution that Africans and their descendants faced mostly from White Christians, since assimilation into White Western societies has always meant assimilation into Christianity. On the other hand, Black nationalist thought often seeks to undermine the claims of Jews to be a persecuted minority in a contest of competitive victimhood, insisting that Jews have become (or always were) part of the dominant White majority and socioeconomic overclass and shared in oppressing Blacks and other underclasses. Scholarship by Jews, meanwhile, presents an awkward dance between the assertion that Jews in the West comprise a postcolonial group, freed from over a millennium of denigration and persecution, the difficulty of acknowledging that Jews might have acted as oppressors, and the conflicting impulses to both acknowledge and minimize past Jewish colonialism amid the similarly challenging possibility of present Jewish belonging to the dominant White stratum and socioeconomic overclass.

Responses to these narratological conflicts between what are essentially divergent national historiographies have left an unsatisfying gap. The ideological work producing the various perspectives, which are only general